

Vermont
Workforce Development Council
1/8/07

Meeting Notes

1) Joint meeting with representatives of the Interagency Workforce Committee:

Pat reported on the priorities that the Interagency Workforce Committee has identified to date. These are items that the committee believes can be implemented in the short term that will have long term effects. These include improving youth career awareness through strategies like career fairs and the new career Web portal being developed by VSAC, VDOL, and other partners, and focusing the annual VSAC guidance counselor conference on economic trends and changing employment opportunities. For the first time VDOL will provide a general session on labor market trends similar to the one Andy Condon did at the WDC meeting. The group also plans to support the Job Corps efforts to improve their linkage to high schools and tech centers, and to increase the enrollment of Vermont students. They will be visiting the Job Corps Center on Feb 22. Mike suggested that one strategy that the Interagency Committee might consider would be to partner with several supervisory districts to focus on a couple of sectors such as Construction and Healthcare where we know there are good employment prospects and provide job fairs, internships, job shadows and workplace tours, then measure the impact.

John observed that employment should be the goal and the common thread for this work. He pointed out that we have plenty of data pointing to a wide range of jobs for which skilled workers are not available as well as data on demographic and global economic trends that can be the basis of a plan. Chip commented that what is missing is a consistent approach to identifying where the skill gaps are that is linked to the capacity and planning cycles of the education and training system. Reliable and accurate data on job opportunities needs to be matched with resources and incentives that support appropriate program development and delivery. A lack of timely and accurate demand data, combined with the relatively slow planning cycle of education institutions means that we will always be playing catch-up unless something changes.

The conversation turned to the challenge of economic planning and who is responsible for carrying it out. Fran pointed out that although it is difficult to make precise predictions, we know that skills like CAD drafting, Civil Engineering, precision measurement, quality control and all sorts of math/science/technology skills will be in high demand. Mike offered to gather some data on workforce needs from the environmental companies they work with. Mike spoke about the need to improve the coordination of agency business outreach programs in order to maximize our capacity to understand the needs and expectations of employers. DED is not staffed or charged with the responsibility for long term economic planning, however because of the nature of the Department's work they are close to employers and well aware of their near-term needs.

The Interagency Committee agreed that they will consider these possibilities and get back to the Executive Committee with some proposed strategies.

2) Common Strategies Workforce Chart

The Chart was reviewed. At Mike's request a column will be added to cover the strategy of attracting Vermont alumni back to the State. Frank suggested that we will have a clearer idea about how to address these challenges once we know what the Governor's strategies on the recommendations of the Next Generation Commission are going to be. It was agreed that if a new NG Commission is to be formed to work in the Math/Science/Technology academies, we should try to get one of our members appointed. Pat will talk to the Governor about this. Frank indicated that he hopes to talk to the Governor about the role of the WDC in regards to addressing the recommendations of the NG Commission. While not inclusive of every strategy found in each group's report, the Chart points out that there is a broad consensus on a number of strategies and that these strategies add up to a comprehensive approach.

3) Review of results of small group input from our full Council meeting:

Chip distributed copies of the results of the small group discussions at the December full Council meeting. The results are consistent with the strategies covered in the Strategies Chart. It was agreed that the meeting was a success and that this activity both confirmed our direction and provided new members with a good orientation to the issues.

4) NGA State Workforce Chairs meeting participation:

It was agreed that as Frank is unable to attend, Jerry will attend this meeting as his representative.

5) Update on VSC Workforce Academy:

Chip reported that several WIB Coordinators have signed up for the Workforce Academy being organized by VTC. Allan Rodgers met with the Exec. Committee in December to explain the purpose of the Academy, which is to provide a professional development opportunity to individuals who manage workforce and adult education programs. VTC will cover most of the cost of this program which was developed at the University of Virginia. The WDC will use State funds to cover tuition (\$150 for the week) for WIB Coordinators, with a priority on regions that need assistance in carrying out their annual plans. The request from several partners that the WDC to convene a subsequent leadership retreat will be discussed at a future meeting once the Governor's intentions on the recommendations of the NG commission become clear.

6) Proposal on Technical assistance to WIBs:

Chip proposed and the Committee agreed that an offer be made to Nancy Burzon of the Rutland WIB to provide technical assistance to several other WIBs who need help in organizing outreach and data gathering for key sectors in their regions where there is a shortage of skilled workers. The goal is to identify needs that can be addressed through WETF Grants.